

# Addressing an Alleged Hadith Contradiction: Was Fatimah b. Qais a Divorcee or a Widow?

by

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## Argument:

Saheeh Muslim, Book 9, Hadith 3515 says that Abu Hafs b. Mughira al-Makhzumi **divorced her three times**, however Saheeh Muslim, Book 41, Hadith 7028 cites Fatimah as saying:

"I married the **son of Mughira** and he was a chosen young man of Quraish at that time, but **he fell as a martyr** in the first Jihad (fighting) on the side of Allah's Messenger. **When I became a widow**, 'Abd al-Rahman b. Auf, one amongst the group of the Companions of Allah's Messenger, sent me the proposal of marriage."

So what was she, divorced or widowed by the son of Mughira?

## Response:

The answer is that the son of Mughira divorced her before he died in battle.<sup>1</sup>

What has caused much of this confusion is the inability of the critic to access the original language of the hadeeth in Arabic and is forced to succumb to the English translation that may be faulty.

What has been translated as "became a widow" is actually *ta'ayyamtu* (تَأَيَّمْتُ) with the root word being *Ayyimu* (أَيِّمٌ) in the singular. The word *Ayyimu* in the Arabic language actually means "one without a spouse" and does not necessarily highlight how or under what circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar as-Asqalani said in his *Fathul Bari*:

فقد ذهب جمع جم إلى أنه مات مع علي باليمن وذلك بعد أن أرسل إليها بطلاقها، فإذا جمع بين الروایتين استقام هذا التأويل وارتفع الوهم

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Mandhur in his *Lisaan al-Arab* said:

وقد تَأَيَّمْتُ إذا كانت بغير زَوْج

Al-Jawhari in his *as-Sihaahu fil-Lugha* said:

As for what was translated as "he fell as a martyr," is actually "fa usseeba" (فَأُصِيبَ), which simply means, "he was injured, hurt, or attacked." In the particular context of the hadeeth, some scholars were of the view that it meant that ibn Mughira was only injured in the battle.<sup>3</sup> They might have felt that it was necessary to understand it as such so that one is misled into thinking that the context would have then implied that Fatimah was widowed. Nevertheless, other scholars felt that the context clearly conveyed that, in fact, ibn Mughira died as a martyr in the battle and that this does not cast doubt on the fact that Fatimah's marriage was already dissolved via divorce prior to ibn Mughira's leaving off to battle.<sup>4</sup>

Some might argue that the context clearly denotes that Fatimah's marriage ended because she was widowed, for immediately after discussing ibn Mughira's participation in the battle, she spoke about how her marriage was dissolved. Given this, one may argue that the "marriage being dissolved" right after the mentioning of "going off to battle and getting killed" would apparently lead the person to make the connection that Fatimah was widowed after ibn Mughira's death.

However, this is not necessarily the case at all. In fact, it is very reasonable for one to read this in another way, which is that Fatimah was merely praising ibn Mughira by mentioning how he was "a chosen young man of Quraish at that time"<sup>5</sup> and proceeded on to mention how he died a martyr, and then she talked about how when her marriage from him dissolved (via divorce), someone else came and proposed to her. So her mentioning of ibn Mughira's death in battle was not for the sake of emphasizing that she was widowed but was mentioned for the sake of praising

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الأبيامي: الذين لا أزواج لهم من الرجال أيهم، سواء كان تزوج من قبل أو لم يتزوج. وامرأة أيهم أيضاً، بكراً كانت أو ثيباً. وقد آمنت المرأة من زوجها تنبئ أئمةً وأئمةً وأيوماً. وتأيمت المرأة، وتأيم الرجل زماناً، إذا مكث لا يتزوج.

Ibn Arabi in his *Ahkaamul Qur'an* said:

قوله: "الأيامى منكم" والأيم فيها قولان: أحدهما أنها التي توفي عنها زوجها، الثاني: أنها التي لا زوج لها

Imam an-Nawawi stated in his commentary on Saheeh Muslim:

أئمة ، وهي التي لا زوج لها

<sup>3</sup> Such as Imam an-Nawawi who said:

وإنما معنى قولها : فأصيب أي بجراحة ، أو أصيب في ماله ، أو نحو ذلك هكذا تأوله العلماء.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani said in his *Fathul Bari*:

وهذه الرواية وهم ، ولكن أولها بعضهم على أن المراد أصيب بجراحة أو أصيب في ماله أو نحو ذلك حكاه النووي وغيره ، والذي يظهر أن المراد بقولها " أصيب " أي مات على ظاهره ، وكان في بعث علي إلئاليمين ، فيصدق أنه أصيب في الجهاد مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أي في طاعة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ، ولا يلزم من ذلك أن تكون بينوتنها منه بالموت بل بالطلاق السابق

<sup>5</sup> See Saheeh Muslim, Book 41, Hadith 7028. The phrase "**chosen** young..." should be better translated as "from amongst the preferred or well of young..."

him (despite being divorced by him).<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, there is no contradiction.

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<sup>6</sup> al-Qaadi 'Iyaadh said in his commentary on Saheeh Muslim:

إنما أرادت به عَدَّ فضائله وذكُر مناقبه، كما ابتدأت بالثناء عليه وهو قولها "وهو من خيار شباب قريش". ثم ذكرت خير تأيّمها منه. وإذا كان هذا، لم يكن فيه معارضة مع الأخبار الأخر.